

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 199
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 08501

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV PINR PINS PINT IR
SUBJ: MEETING WITH MINISTER OF INTERIOR

1. ON MORNING SEPTEMBER 6, I CALLED ON NEWLY INSTALLED
MINISTER OF INTERIOR, GENERAL ABBAS GHARABAGHI.
I FOUND HIM STILL WEARING HIS MILITARY UNIFORM AND
JUST HAVING RETURNED FROM AN AUDIENCE WITH THE SHAH
WHERE HE HAD PRESENTED TWO NEW MAYORS FOR INSTALLATION.

2. GHARABAGHI BEGAN THE CONVERSATION BY SAYING THAT
THE COUNTRY WAS IN THE GRIP "OF COMMUNIST SUBVERSION."
HE DREW ON HIS STUDIES AT THE FRENCH ECOLE SUPERIEUR
DE GUERT TO DESCRIBE THE CURRENT SITUATION AS "PHASE II"

IN THE "SUBVERSIVE WAR." HE SAID THAT THE MONDAY
DEMONSTRATIONS IN TEHRAN HAD DEMONSTRATED "SUPERB
ORGANIZATION" (COMMENT: THEY DID) AND THAT THIS WAS
BEYOND THE CAPABILITY OF THE MULLAHS. HE ALSO CITED
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THE ATTACK MORNING SEPT 6 ON A POLICE UNIT BARRACKS
TO INDICATE THAT THE COMMUNIST TERRORIST GROUPS WERE AT
WORK.

3. WE THEN WENT THROUGH THE USUAL DIALOGUE ABOUT
FOREIGN INSTIGATION RELATIVE TO INDIGENOUS INSPIRATION
AND EVEN RANG THE CHARGES OR THE RUMORS OF CIA INVOLVE-

MENT. AS FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF THE DEMONSTRATION, I POINTED OUT THAT IRANIAN STUDENTS IN THE U.S. PROVED THEMSELVES CAPABLE OF SUCH ORGANIZATION ON A NOTOROUSLY REGULAR BASIS.

4. GHARABAGHI SAID MONDAY'S "FLOWER-POWER" APPROACH TO THE TROOPS WAS DANGEROUS. HE SAID IT WAS DESIGNED TO "SEDUCE" THE MILITARY AND MAKE THEM UNABLE TO SHOW A FIRM HAND IF ONE BECAME NECESSARY AT A LATER DATE. WHILE HE AGREED THAT A MILITARY SOLUTION WAS IMPOSSIBLE, HE FEARED A CONFRONTATION MIGHT BE PROVOKED.

5. CONVERSATION THEN TURNED TO SUBJECT OF ELECTIONS. MINISTER SAID THE BAZAARS DID NOT BELIEVE SHAH WOULD PERMIT FREE ELECTIONS. HE WAS GOING TO TEHRAN BAZAAR THAT SAME AFTERNOON TO ANNOUNCE THAT THERE WOULD BE FREE ELECTIONS FOR THE BAZAARI GUILDS. HE FELT THAT, ONCE THE BAZAARIS EXPERIENCED THIS IN PRACTICE, THEY WOULD HAVE MORE FAITH IN THE SHAH'S PROMISE FOR FREE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS.

6. AS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, THE GOVT WILL "PROBABLY" WITHDRAW THE ELECTION LAW CURRENTLY BEFORE THE MAJLES AND CONDUCT THE ELECTIONS ON THE BASIS OF THE OLD LAW. THIS HAS SOME ANACHRONISMS, SUCH AS MULTIPLE MEMBER DISTRICTS, BUT IT IS LESS CONTROVERSIAL
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THAN THE PROPOSED LAW. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE CLAMORS FOR AN EARLY DISSOLUTION OF THE PARLIAMENT AND ELECTIONS NOW, THE MINISTER FEELS IT WILL REQUIRE MORE TIME TO ORGANIZE GENUINE ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL GROUPS WILL NEED THE TIME ALSO. THE CURRENT PLAN IS TO STAY WITH THE JUNE DATE ANNOUNCED BY THE SHAH.

7. COMMENT: GHARABAGHI IS A DECENT, STRAIGHT-ARROW SOLDIER OF COMPLETE LOYALTY TO THE SHAH (THEY WERE CLASSMATES). HE CAN BE CONSIDERED GENUINE IN HIS DESIRE TO ORGANIZE HONEST ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, HE SAYS HE PLANS TO USE THE BUREAUCRATIC STAFF HE HAS INHERITED UNLESS HE FINDS SOME REAL ROTTEN APPLES IN THE MINISTRY. HE IS A MAN WITHOUT POLITICAL GUILF AND SUBJECT TO THE LIMITATIONS OF A FRENCH-ORIENTED MILITARY BACKGROUND (OUR CONVERSATION WAS IN FRENCH). HE WILL BE AN IMPECCABLE BUT UNIMAGINATIVE MINISTER OF INTERIOR.
SULLIVAN

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